

SITE DESCRIPTIONS

Descriptions for 28 biologically significant sites in Watauga County are contained in this section. Figure 5 shows the locations of the sites from a whole-county perspective. The site descriptions are arranged within geographic or ecological themes, in the following order: Amphibolite Mountains Macrosite Sites; New River Corridor Sites; Bogs and Swamp Forests of Watauga County; Grandfather Mountain Window Sites; Unaka Ranges Sites; and Blue Ridge Escarpment Sites. Amphibolite Mountains Macrosite Sites are those which lie in northern Watauga County in a unique area dominated by amphibolite rock types. New River Corridor Sites includes a site describing the importance of aquatic habitats in the New River as well as a terrestrial site in the river corridor. Bogs and Swamp Forests of Watauga County comprises sites across the county that are significant as wetlands. Grandfather Mountain Window Sites contains sites associated by their position in the complex Grandfather Mountain Geologic Window, which covers a large area in southern Watauga County. Unaka Ranges Sites are those located in the Unaka Ranges physiographic region of western Watauga County, which is viewed as separate from the Blue Ridge Ranges region. Blue Ridge Escarpment Sites are those on the steep escarpment area of eastern Watauga County.

Each description includes a site map, most of which are at the standard 1:24,000 scale, though a few large sites are shown at other scales. The names of quadrangle maps for sites that are provided all refer to 1:24,000 scale USGS topographic maps. For a few sites, both a primary boundary (i.e., single-tick-line) and a secondary boundary (i.e., double-tick-lines) are shown. Acreages are for entire sites, including both primary and secondary boundaries if present. In most cases, "site" is used to refer to the various significant natural areas in the county. This convention is deviated from in the case of the description for the Amphibolite Mountains Macrosite, which is a larger geographic entity which contains a cluster of significant sites. For clarity, the smaller significant sites (which are a part of the larger Macrosite) are referred to there as "standard sites".

Names of natural community types correspond to those in Classification of the Natural Communities of North Carolina: Third Approximation (Schafale and Weakley, 1990). Rare plant species names and statuses are as listed in the Natural Heritage Program List of the Rare Plant Species of North Carolina (Amoroso, 1999). Watch List plant species -- those which are generally uncommon and which may be determined to be rare in the future -- appear in some descriptions and are described more completely by Amoroso (1999). Rare animal species names and statuses are as listed in the Natural Heritage Program List of the Rare Animals of North Carolina (LeGrand and Hall, 1999). Updated site boundary and rare species location information are kept in a Geographic Information System at the Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (CGIA) in Raleigh or the western regional CGIA in Asheville.

Each site is assigned one of four levels of biological significance which are determined by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program by comparing site attributes with those of other sites. The levels of significance are defined as: